

Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

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INFO AMCONSUL/FLORENCE 3184

AMCONSUL GENOA

AMCONSUL MILAN

AMCONSUL NAPLES

AMCONSUL PALERMO

AMCONSUL TRIESTE

AMCONSUL TURIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 12565

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH OF NEW ITALIAN PRESIDENT, ALLESSANDRO
PERTINI

1. VETERAN SOCIALIST LEADER ALLESSANDRO PERTINI WAS ELECTED ITALY'S SEVENTH PRESIDENT ON JULY 8. BORN AT STELLA, SAVONA, ON SEPTEMBER 25, 1896, PERTINI GRADUATED CUM LAUDE IN LAW FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF GENOA IN 1921 AND IN POLITICAL ECONOMY FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORENCE IN 1922. HE JOINED THE PSI WHILE STILL A STUDENT, AND SERVED AS SECRETARY TO THE ITALIAN SOCIALIST FILIPPO TURATI. HIS CAREER FROM THE EARLY 1920'S UNTIL THE END OF THE WAR IN 1945 READS LIKE A DUMAS NOVEL. HE SUFFERED SEVERAL ARRESTS AT THE HANDS OF THE ITALIAN FASCISTS, MADE SEVERAL ESCAPES, LIVED IN EXILE FOR A TIME IN FRANCE BUT RETURNED TO ITALY IN 1927 AND WAS AGAIN JAILED. HE WAS AT ONE POINT SEIZED BY THE GERMANS SS, BUT ESCAPED FROM THE REGINA COELI PRISON IN ROME JUST BEFORE HE WAS TO BE SHOT.

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2. FOLLOWING THE WAR, PERTINI SERVED BRIEFLY AS PARTY SECRETARY IN 1945, AND THEREAFTER HELD VARIOUS POSITIONS IN THE PSI PARTY HIERARCHY, INCLUDING THE EDITORSHIP OF THE PARTY ORGAN, AVANTI. HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE POST-WAR CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY WHICH PRECEDED THE CREATION OF PARLIAMENT, AND HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1948. HE WAS ELECTED

PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, THE THIRD RANKING POSITION IN THE ITALIAN STATE, IN JUNE 1968. HE SERVED IN THAT POSITION UNTIL HIS VIRTUAL POLITICAL RETIREMENT IN 1976. THEREAFTER, HE RETAINED A SEAT IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES.

3. FOR MANY YEARS, PERTINI WAS A STRONG EXPONENT OF CLOSE LINKS BETWEEN THE PSI AND THE COMMUNISTS. HIS CONTINUED PERSEVERANCE IN THIS VIEW AFTER NENNI AND OTHER MAJOR LEADERS HAD BROKEN WITH THE PCI LED TO HIS ISOLATION FOR A TIME FROM THE MAINSTREAM OF THE PSI. HOWEVER, HE EVENTUALLY ACCOMMODATED HIMSELF TO THE CENTER-LEFT FORMULA OF THE SIXTIES AND EARLY SEVENTIES. MORE RECENTLY, HE SUPPORTED THE PSI'S LEFT-ALTERNATIVE POLICY. ALTHOUGH WE KNOW LITTLE OF PERTINI'S CURRENT VIEWS, HE DIFFERED PUBLICLY WITH CURRENT PSI SECRETARY CRAXI OVER THE PARTY'S POLICY ON THE MORO KIDNAPPING. IN OPPOSITION TO CRAXI'S "AUTONOMIST", "HUMANITARIAN" EFFORT TO SECURE MORO'S RELEASE, PERTINI WAS OUTSPOKEN IN HIS REJECTION OF ANY NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE RED BRIGADE TERRORISTS. SUPPORTED INITIALLY BY THE PCI AND THEN BY THE DC, PERTINI WAS NOT THE PSI LEADERSHIP'S FAVORED CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

4. PERTINI ENJOYS A REPUTATION FOR PERSONAL INTEGRITY AND STRONG COMMITMENT TO THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM. SMALL AND WIRY, PERTINI SPEAKS IN RAPID-FIRE STACCATO FASHION. HE SPEAKS NO ENGLISH, BUT MAY UNDERSTAND SOME. HE IS MARRIED AND LIVES IN ROME. GARDNER

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